

The State of Preconception Health in North Carolina

A Fact Sheet from the North Carolina Women's and Children's Health Section and the State Center for Health Statistics

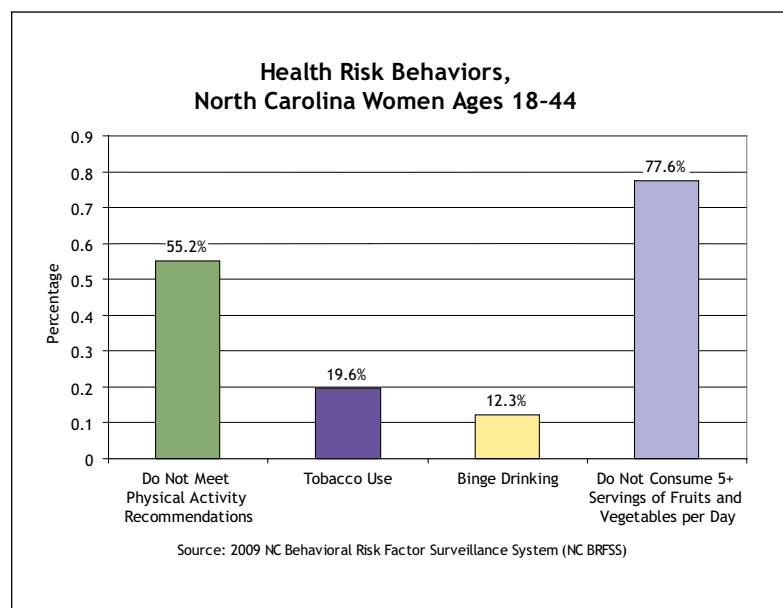
Why is Preconception Health Important?

There are approximately 1.7 million women of childbearing age in North Carolina.¹ They are our mothers, our sisters, our aunts, our friends, and our neighbors. They work in our schools, our offices, our factories, our hospitals, our restaurants, and our homes. The health of these women is inextricably linked to the health of their babies and can have an impact on the health of their families as well.



Risk Behaviors that Affect Women

Many women of childbearing age in North Carolina (defined as women from 18 to 44 years old) engage in risky behaviors which might make them more vulnerable to chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver disease, respiratory disease, and cancer. These risk factors include smoking, alcohol misuse, inadequate physical activity, and poor nutrition.



Over half of women in this age group do not meet physical activity recommendations (55%), one in five (20%) are current smokers, more than one in ten (12%) report binge drinking, and more than three out of four (78%) report not consuming recommended levels of fruits and vegetables.² These risk behaviors can contribute to reduced life expectancy as well as poor pregnancy outcomes including preterm birth, low birth weight, and birth defects.³